

ii₄ PRINCE BILLOW AND HIS
MEMOIRS

after its despatch did the writer confess what he had done, and, when the Chancellor convinced him that the letter must on no account reach the President's hands, he was permitted to telegraph instructions to New York to return it unopened to Berlin. The Kaiser, he suggests, must have been glad when the war broke out that such a high explosive was not in the possession of the admirer who had turned into his most uncom-promising foe. On another occasion Billow also narrowly succeeded in averting a costly blunder. " I shall, of course, take no notice of the wife of Franz Ferdinand," remarked William II as they journeyed to Vienna in 1903. Wedel, the German Ambassador in Vienna, who was also travelling in the Imperial saloon, protested in vain. The Chancellor motioned to Wedel to leave him along with his master, knowing full well that he would never climb down in the presence of a third party. The impetuous monarch was still protesting when they reached the terminus. " You have now the choice of making the future Emperor of Austria a friend or a foe for ever," whispered Billow, shooting his final bolt as the train, pulled up. A moment later the Kaiser was greeting Franz Ferdinand in the friendliest manner and saying, " When may I have the honour of paying my homage to your wife ? " The Archduke,- blushing with delight, bowed and kissed the Kaiser's hand, and the friendship began which lasted unbroken till the shots rang out at Serajevo. We find in these pages more than one discussion whether William IE could be described as altogether normal. Hohenlohe had his doubts. His successor in the Chancellorship maintains that he was, though he was excitable and superficial. Though the portrait of William II is drawn with special care, every prominent actor on the crowded -

stage comes up
for judgment. Of Bismarck, whom he had known
from boy-
hood and whom he visited at Friedrichsruh soon
after his
appointment as Foreign Minister, he speaks with
unbounded
admiration, and he performed the difficult feat of
keeping on
good terms with Herbert Bismarck to the end.
The widowed
Empress Frederick appears in her usual role of
Cassandra.
" Remember what I tell you to-day, Donna Laura/"
said she to
the mother of Princess Billow; " Mon fils sera la
mine de
l'Allemagne." We hear much of the Kaiserin's
unselfish
devotion to husband and children, and not a little
of her trials
and overstrained nerves. Hohenlohe is invariably
mentioned
with respect for his independence and ripe
judgment. The